

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claims 1-14 in the underlying PCT application, without prejudice.

Please add the following new claims:

15. (New) A method for determining a future travel-path area of a first vehicle, the first vehicle equipped with a distance sensor, comprising the steps of:

 determining a relative position of at least one second vehicle traveling ahead of the first vehicle, the first vehicle determining the relative position of the at least one second vehicle at predetermined timepoints using the distance sensor;

 storing the determined relative position of the at least one second vehicle in a storage device, the determined relative position constituting a course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead;

 determining the future travel-path area of the first vehicle at least as a function of the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead; and

 projecting the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead in direction of a position of the first vehicle.

16. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein the step of projecting the course path of the at least one second vehicle includes projecting the course path of the at least one second vehicle to a position in which the first vehicle is located occurs up to the position of the first vehicle.

17. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising the step of:

 determining at least one of a transverse offset and a curvature between the projected course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead and a current course path of the first vehicle.

18. (New) The method according to claim 17, further comprising the step of:

 determining the future travel-path area of the first vehicle using at least one of a transverse offset and a curvature of the current course path of the first vehicle in relation to the projected course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead.

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19. (New) The method according to claim 18, wherein the determining of the future travel-path area is based on a plurality of projected course paths of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead, and further comprising:

filtering out a lane change of one of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead using one of a comparison, a correlation, and an average of the plurality of projected course paths of all of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead.

20. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:

comparing the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead stored with at least one coordinate of the current course path of the first vehicle at at least one of selected timepoints and freely selectable timepoints.

21. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein the step of projecting the course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead is accomplished using at least one of statistical analyses and mathematical interpolation procedures on the determined relative position stored.

22. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:

evaluating the projected course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead using at least one performance criterion, wherein the at least one performance criterion contains a statistical component, a nonpredictable component and a predictable component.

23. (New) The method according to claim 22, further comprising:

when the at least one performance criterion of the projected course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead is less than a predetermined threshold performance value, then at least one of: (i) deleting the projected course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead from the storage device and (ii) not considering the projected course path of the at least one second vehicle traveling ahead in the determining of the future travel-path area of the first vehicle.

24. (New) The method according to claim 15, wherein the storage device is configured as a ring storage device.

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25. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:
when the storage device is full, determining whether to delete at least one of the course path stored and any new course paths, in accordance with a performance criterion based on at least one predictable component.
26. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:
limiting the future travel-path area based on at least one of a position of detected stationary objects and a position of detected oncoming vehicles.
27. (New) The method according to claim 15, further comprising:
determining at least one further future travel-path area of the first vehicle based on at least one of a steering angle, a steering wheel angle, a yaw rate, a difference of wheel speed, a transverse acceleration of the first vehicle, a stationary object detected by the distance sensor of the first vehicle, and an oncoming vehicle detected by the distance sensor of the first vehicle; and
determining a verified future travel-path area based on the future travel-path area and the at least one further future travel-path area.
28. (New) A device for determining a future travel-path area of a first vehicle, the first vehicle having a current course path, comprising:
a distance sensor associated with the first vehicle to determine at predetermined time points at least a relative position of at least one vehicle traveling ahead in relation to the first vehicle;
at least one storage device configured to store the relative position determined;
an arrangement configured to determine a travel-path of the at least one vehicle traveling ahead from the at least the relative position stored in the storage device;
an arrangement configured to determine the future travel-path area of the first vehicle at least based on the travel-path of the at least one vehicle traveling ahead; and
an arrangement configured to project the travel-path of the at least one vehicle traveling ahead in direction of the current course path of the first vehicle.